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RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 1596
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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

[1](#)1. Mideast

[1](#)2. Iran

Key stories in the media:

Israel Radio quoted Deputy State Department Spokesman Robert Wood as saying yesterday: QNo one is asking Israel to act outside its national security interests. What weQre asking both parties to do

is to fulfill the Roadmap obligations. Both sides have committed to do that. We are working with the parties to try to help them fulfill those commitments.Q Wood was responding to a reporter's question regarding a statement by Deputy Israeli PM Dan Meridor (Likud) that U.S. calls for a freeze on West Bank settlement construction run counter to past agreement between the two nations and could undermine the U.S. credibility. (The Jerusalem Post quoted Likud cabinet minister Dan Meridor as saying yesterday that the U.S. must honor its deal with Israel on the settlement issue.) The Jerusalem Post and Israel Radio also quoted Wood as saying in response to a question whether the U.S. would be ready to exert some financial pressures on Israel to convince the government to stop settlements: QIt's premature to talk about that. What we're trying to do, as I said, right now is to create an environment which makes it conducive for talks to go forward. And as I said, Senator Mitchell is working very hard on this. And what we all need to do in the international community is support this effort, and that means Americans, that means Arabs and Israelis, to do what they can to kind of foster a climate in which the two sides can come together and negotiate their differences peacefully so that we can get to that two-state solution.Q Speaking on Israel Radio this morning, Housing and Construction Minister Ariel Atias (Shas) said that all public construction in East Jerusalem has been frozen since the Netanyahu government was sworn in. Atias said that no democratic nation intervenes in private construction anywhere. He stated that such building continues in East Jerusalem, but that it is not connected to government policy. Israel Radio quoted incoming Israeli Ambassador to the U.S. Michael Oren as saying that the argument between the U.S. and Israel will end soon.

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Major media reported that senior White House adviser Dennis Ross will join the list of top U.S. officials travelling to Israel next week, a step that The Jerusalem Post said was interpreted positively in Jerusalem as an attempt by the Obama administration to engage more constructively with Israel.

Israel Hayom and HaQaretz reported that Sweden Q which currently holds the rotating presidency of the EU -- France, Russia, and other international bodies, have added their voices to the demand that Israel freeze Jewish construction in East Jerusalem.

Yediot quoted diplomatic sources in Jerusalem as saying that the U.S. administration is inclined to act in the Middle East on three tracks in parallel: The Syrian-Israeli track, the Palestinian-Israeli track, and the Lebanese-Israeli track. (Details in QBlock QuotesQ below.)

Maariv reported that the PA has conveyed to President Obama its demand that Israel dismantle the West Bank security fence. The Palestinians justified their claim by pointing to the quiet that has prevailed in the territories over the past two years.

Leading media reported that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton warned Iran that Washington is ready to boost the defense capabilities of regional U.S. allies if Tehran does not back away from its nuclear program. The Secretary was quoted as saying that "we will still hold the door open" to engagement with Iran but that "the nuclear clock is ticking", adding that Iran's neighbors are the most concerned about events. Clinton was speaking on Thailand's Nation TV. She said Washington was also prepared to "upgrade the defense of our partners in the region," adding that Iran must understand it will not be safer "if the United States extends a defense umbrella in the region."

HaQaretz reported that Hamas political bureau chief Khaled Mashal told a Russian diplomat a few days ago that his group would not stand in the way of a peace deal brokered between PA President Mahmoud Abbas and Israel. The newspaper reported that Israeli officials have expressed skepticism about Mashal's reported comments. The Jerusalem Post cited military assessments that Hamas has lowered its profile in the West Bank out of fear its men will be captured by the PA and the IDF, and that it is operating a number of terrorist cells in every major city that are completely compartmentalized to ensure survival. Speaking on Israel Radio this morning, Minister-without-Portfolio Benny Begin (Likud) said that Turkey's mediation between Israel and Syria has lost its value following Syria's rapprochement with Turkey.

HaQaretz reported that the police's Shai District, which is responsible for the West Bank, has set up a special dedicated command to handle preparations for a large-scale evacuation of illegal settler outposts. The new unit will be headed by Brig. Gen. Amitai Levy, commander of the Border Police forces in the West Bank. It will follow the model of the special commands set up in Gaza and the northern West Bank prior to the evacuation of settlements there during the 2005 disengagement. Though the command was set up by the police, all police operations in the West Bank are formally under the authority of the IDF. Therefore once the government gives the order for preparations to start, any IDF units involved in the evacuations will presumably be attached to the command.

Israel Hayom and Israel Radio reported that Education Minister Gideon SaQar has ordered the removal of references to the Palestinian QNakbaQ from textbooks for Israeli Arab students. Former education minister Yuli Tamir (Labor) had approved the insertion of such citations.

Maariv reported that yesterday the Gazan doctor whose three daughters were accidentally killed by the IDF during Operation Cast Lead emigrated to Canada.

The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday the IDF denied a report that it plans to remove 23 illegal outposts in one day.

HaQaretz reported that Elad, the nonprofit organization that runs the City of David in East Jerusalem and also works to settle Jews in that area, has asked the Jerusalem municipality to approve four new construction projects there. The city is considered unlikely to say no. Given the recent international uproar over Jewish construction in East Jerusalem, these projects, all located in the Silwan neighborhood, are likely to add fuel to the flames. They are also likely to infuriate Palestinians, given that demolition orders were recently issued to dozens of Palestinian houses not far away. Elad is seeking to build several apartment buildings, a 100-car-capacity parking lot, a synagogue, a kindergarten, roads, and additional tourism infrastructure. The municipality's planning and building council is slated to discuss the applications in the coming months. HaQaretz also reported that Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat has withdrawn his municipal master plan following mounting pressure from right-wing activists and council members. The move comes after Barkat had previously authorized the plans.

Leading media reported that the military prosecution plans to render charges against the lieutenant-colonel and staff-sergeant involved in a NaQalin shooting incident more serious. The ID soldier was documented firing a rubber bullet at bound, blindfolded Palestinian in July. The two were originally charged with conduct unbecoming, but IDF Judge Advocate General Brig.-Gen. Avi Mandlblit has decided to add threat to the charges against Lt. Col. Omri Burberg and illegal use of a weapon to the charges against the soldier under his command.

Citing a State Department-issued document it received, HaQaretz reported that the U.S. has asked 10 uranium-rich countries that produce yellowcake to tighten their monitoring of sales of the mineral to Iran. The move is reportedly based on an American estimate that Iran's uranium reserves will run out by 2010.

Yediot reported that data kept in the Interior Ministry's computers are unguarded, making it more difficult for the state to establish biometric records.

The Jerusalem Post's social column reported on Continental Airlines' celebration of its 75th anniversary along with the 10th anniversary of its New York-Tel Aviv route at the U.S. Ambassador's residence.

1. Mideast:

Block Quotes:

1. "Plan for Progress on Three Tracks"

Associate diplomatic correspondent Itamar Eichner and correspondent Yossi Yehoshua wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (7/22): Q[Diplomatic sources in Jerusalem say that] the U.S. administration is inclined to act in the Middle East on three tracks in parallel: The Syrian-Israeli track, the Palestinian-Israeli track and the Lebanese-Israeli track.... One of the tracks in which the Americans wish to act is the Lebanese-Israeli track. In their assessment, it is possible to reach an agreement in this track quickly, since there are no real disputes between the two countries.... As for the Palestinian track-according to information that has reached Jerusalem, the U.S. administration conveyed sharp messages to the PA over its refusal to meet with Israelis and promote projects. The Americans notified the Palestinians that it was unacceptable for [the Palestinians] to pose conditions for renewing the dialogue with Israel. Information that has reached Israel indicates that the Americans intend to restart the peace process by an international conference, whose format has not yet been agreed on. They are considering inviting leaders of Arab states to this conference, and perhaps leaders of Islamic states as well. The Americans are pressuring the moderate Arab states to make gestures towards Israel in the area of normalization, so as to make it easier for Israel to be flexible on the settlement issue. Until now, however, the Arab states have shown little willingness to accommodate Israel. This is the reason that President Obama said in his meeting with Jewish leaders that the Arab state leaders lacked courage. However, the Americans are not only disappointed with the Arabs, but also with Israel.... And while there is tension in the political realm between Israel and the U.S., in the military realm cooperation is continuing and being strengthened between the IDF and the U.S. military.

II. "Evacuate without Fear"

The independent, left-leaning HaQaretz editorialized (7/22): QThreats by the settlers and those on the extreme right to take vigorous action against the evacuation plans are nothing new, and the political and military challenge posed by the evacuation of the outposts is known. The Israel Defense Forces is accustomed to this.

However, this must not dissuade the government from carrying out its intentions. It must set boundaries against lawbreakers -- immediately, without compromise and with no conditions -- and instruct the IDF to evacuate the outposts.

III. "Deceiving Ourselves"

Uri Savir, Oslo Accords architect and President of the Peres Center for Peace, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (7/22): QIn talks with President Obama's representatives, it is time for us to be honest with our neighbors, our allies, and mainly with ourselves, with regard to continuing the settlement policy. Here is what I propose on this matter: First of all, construction will only be completed in authorized housing units, for which infrastructure has already been set up. As for natural growth, only public construction (kindergartens and schools) will be permitted, and this too will only be within the built-up area (mainly high-rise construction). Secondly, the government will start internal preparations for creating settlement blocs that will enable a final status arrangement and a permanent border with a land swap. The settlement issue is not a matter of how many houses will be built in one settlement or another. It is a strategic issue, which will also decide our ability to coordinate with the United States and the possibility of making peace with a demilitarized Palestinian state.

IV. "Of Truth and a Certain Lie"

Zalman Shoval, a senior Likud member and former ambassador to the U.S., wrote in the independent Israel Hayom (7/22): QOver the weekend, two articles worthy of note were published in the Washington Post -- one by former prime minister Ehud Olmert, and the other by the Crown Prince of Bahrain. Presumably, the timing was

not accidental. Both were aimed at influencing the discussions and events in the Obama administration's attempts to cast a new mold for the diplomatic processes in the Middle East. Olmert is worthy of praise. In fact, he is backing the government in the debate with the U.S. on the matter of construction in the settlements. The main points that Olmert raised dealt with the relationship between the U.S. and Israel (as opposed to its relationship with the Arab and Muslim world), which is based on interests, but equally on a true moral partnership of freedom and democracy. Therefore, both sides should be careful not to be harmed.... Conversely, the article written by Sheikh Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifa of Bahrain is a horse of a different color. Whether it was written by the crown prince himself or someone else, it is a psycho-political effort aimed at deceiving the naive reader. According to the article, we face an opportunity for ideal peace between Jews and Arabs, and only a few ostensibly minor affairs are preventing it from being achieved. To demonstrate objectivity and openness, al-Khalifa admits that there is need for a fresh thinking and that the Arab side has not done enough to communicate directly with the people of Israel, but his true intention is clear. He did not speak about having the Arab side initiate, for example, reciprocal visits between Israelis and Arab citizens and leaders, did not deal with cultural exchanges or stopping the horrific anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic propaganda in the Arab media -- and certainly did not mention willingness to recognize Israel as the state of the Jewish people. What al-Khalifa asked for was a direct appeal to the Israeli public, over the head of the elected government, by means of part of the media or various left wing organizations. Here are two articles that attest to the diplomatic situation: One aims towards the truth -- and the other ignores it.

11. Obama's Calculations Were Wrong

Amnon Lord, Editor-in-Chief of the nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe, wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (7/22): The way Obama fixed upon Israel as an ugly vehicle for rapprochement with the Muslim world was simply too transparent. Thus Obama, who initially was much admired by many in Israel, has failed in his attempt to create a political crisis here and instead reaped a harvest of hatred. These days he is despised in Israel, with his lack of moral fiber regarding Iran and the elections putting there adding fuel to the fire. Both his policy toward Iran and that regarding Israel have exposed U.S. weaknesses. One outcome now emerging is a rapprochement between Israel and Egypt. Both countries are concerned about sharing a border with an Islamist fundamentalist regime in Gaza; both feel threatened by Iran; and both are disturbed by the destabilizing effect of Obama's initiatives in the region and elsewhere. Thus one positive outcome of the developments of the past couple of months is Egypt and Israel hugging each other tightly in the dark.

12. Iran:

Block Quotes:

"Robert McNamara's Legacy"

Senior military affairs analyst Reuven Pedatzur wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (7/22): What relevance does [the late U.S. Defense Secretary Robert] McNamara's legacy hold for us? If Iran attains nuclear weapons, the cost of a strike by these weapons penetrating Israeli defenses would be even more intolerable than in the American case. There will therefore be no choice but to base our policy against the Iranian threat on deterrence instead of defense. We will also have to learn from the American case how to attain stable deterrence and prevent a mistake that would lead to undesired launches. Iran does not know Israel, but (if foreign reports are true about Israel's nuclear capability), from the moment the nuclear threat is mutual, it will be in Iran's interest to prevent nuclear war from breaking out accidentally. They will understand that the cost of such a war would be intolerable. Mutual deterrence and mutually assured destruction would be the basis for strategic balance between Israel and a nuclear Iran. Following McNamara's death, one of his most important diagnoses should be adopted: Nuclear weapons serve no military purposes whatsoever.

They are totally useless -- except only to deter one's opponent from using them.

CUNNINGHAM